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September 22, 2009

WASHINGTON - Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) announced today that federal grants totaling \$23,206,912.03 have been awarded for projects in Ascension, St. Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parishes. This federal funding, awarded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, will reimburse local governments, school boards, and utilities for the cost of various recovery projects following recent hurricanes.

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"From rebuilding levees, to repairing electrical lines, to replacing schools, our hurricane recovery needs in south Louisiana have been significant over the past few years," said Congressman Melancon. "Meeting them has been an ongoing challenge for our communities."

Congressman Melancon continued, **"Since the 2005 and 2008 hurricanes, community leaders in Plaquemines, St. Bernard and Jefferson Parishes have worked diligently to keep people safe and repair the damage. These federal grants will help them continue with important recovery projects and provide financial relief to our communities. As an advocate for Louisiana in Congress, I will continue working to bring federal dollars back home to support our most urgent priorities."**

Earlier this year, federal funds were authorized to cover 100 percent of total eligible costs for debris removal and emergency protective measures, such as flood fighting and plugging levee breaches. The reimbursements for Plaquemines Parish come at no cost to the parish.

"We're very glad to have this work approved. Thorough preparations allowed us to react quickly to protect lives and property when the levees broke, and at the same time meet the federal guidelines," said Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser.

St. Bernard Parish Public School Board President Doris Voitier added: **"These funds provide us the structural and financial stability needed to focus on educating students and helping them achieve their goals."**

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The following federal grants were announced today:

- **\$7,428,250.72 to Plaquemines Parish for repairs to the Citrus Lands Levee.** After Hurricane Ike's storm surge created a 200-foot breach in the Citrus Lands levee, the Plaquemines Parish government acted to close the breach and make temporary repairs to the damaged levee. These repairs reduced the immediate threat to private and public property, and protected the lives, public health, and safety of citizens in Plaquemines Parish.

- **\$1,177,672 to replace W. Smith Elementary School in St. Bernard Parish.** During and after Hurricane Katrina, water reaching nine feet flooded the school and flying debris destroyed the building. This federal grant will reimburse the St. Bernard Parish School Board for the cost of replacing the school facility.

- **\$3,290,827.25 to reimburse St. Bernard Parish School Board to replace school materials and contents.** Breaches in levees from Hurricane Katrina destroyed instructional materials and supplies at many St. Bernard Parish schools. This federal grant will reimburse the parish school board for costs related to replacing publications, information technology, furniture, and school equipment and supplies.

- **\$5,147,788.06 to reimburse the Dixie Electric Membership Co-op for repairs to the electric distribution system in Ascension Parish.** Hurricane Gustav damaged more than 3,000 miles of electrical lines in south Louisiana. This federal grant reimburses DEMCO for repairing electrical components in Ascension Parish that supply power to over 12,000 households and businesses. DEMCO is the largest electric cooperative in Louisiana in terms of number of meters, serving more than 95,000 members in the seven southeast Louisiana parishes of Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, and West Feliciana.

- **\$6,162,374 to rebuild Terrytown Elementary School in Jefferson Parish.** Storm surge and flooding from Hurricane Katrina damaged the school's windows, walls, floors, ceilings and electrical system. The grant version announced today expands the scope of the work that will be reimbursed and increases the grant amount to more accurately reflect the costs incurred by the Parish to replace the school facility.

During the last four years, Congressman Melancon has worked in Congress to reduce the financial burden on citizens and local governments in south Louisiana following major hurricanes. After Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, he worked to reduce the local cost share requirement for disaster recovery projects in Louisiana, and even eliminate it for some projects, making them 100% federally-funded.

Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Congressman Melancon also worked to with Congressional leadership to waive 100 percent of the local cost share requirement for disaster recovery projects in Louisiana. Before the local cost share was waived by Congress in May 2007, many of the estimated 23,000 disaster recovery projects in Louisiana had been put on hold because local governments did not have the resources to provide the match.

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